

MASONRY IN MANITOBA

Published by Authority of Grand Lodge

VOL. 4

SEPTEMBER 1948

No. 7

THE COMMITTEE OF ENQUIRY

From time to time in recent years the writer has been called by telephone to answer questions as to the qualifications and character of a petitioner seeking membership in a City lodge. These enquiries have been made by members of different lodges and not confined to any particular one. The custom seems quite general.

Now the telephone is a great modern invention and undoubtedly enables us to make quick connection between two persons. But it should never be used as the medium for making an enquiry into the habits and life of a man whose intimate character is under the close scrutiny of a Masonic lodge.

Frequently it has happened that the person making the enquiry by telephone has apologized because he was personally unknown to the man he called.

Too often, and here again we speak from personal experience, the supposed enquiry has been made without one member of the committee making it part of his investigation to meet the petitioner in person.

Let us review the duties of the brethren charged with the responsibility of making the enquiry.

Can he satisfy himself by the use of a telephone that the petitioner professes a belief in a Supreme Being; that he is in a financial position to maintain membership in a Masonic Lodge; that he is of good moral character; that he has two arms and two legs; and that he is a fit and proper person to receive the rights and benefits of the Craft?

These are but a few of the mandatory requirements about which you must satisfy yourself before affixing your signature to a report.

How do you perform your duty?

It would seem evident that not a few of our brethren follow the line of least resistance and with a telephone handy make full use of this means in making their enquiries.

We may be charged as being old fashioned, nevertheless it is our sincere belief that the only satisfactory result will be achieved by a personal interview and interrogation between the man making the enquiry and the man making the petition.

Here then is one section of our Constitution which should be studied carefully by Lodge officers and members alike. The regulations for our government as Freemasons were adopted for the guidance of all our members. Surely it is necessary that men who undertake duties should thoroughly understand their responsibility. A close examination of our Constitution will give direction and is your sure rule and guide.

THE JUNIOR WARDEN'S TOAST

We are all familiar with the well known verse which we recite at the close of all our festive gatherings "Happy to Meet—Sorry to Part—Happy to Meet Again."

Recently we came across an interesting item regarding what in Manitoba we chose to designate The Junior Warden's Toast. Believing there are many members interested in everything connecting Freemasonry with the days of long ago we are passing it on.

"This tag 'as happily we have met,' is nearly always recited by the Junior Warden at the end of the closing of the F.C. Degree. Since brethren often wonder why it should have its place there, rather than at the end of the final closing which would seem more rational, the following may be of interest."

The writer continues, "this is an adaption of one of the oldest folksongs in the English language, which runs somewhat as follows:

Merry have we met, merry have we been,
Merry may we part, and merry meet again;
With our merry sing song, happy, gay and free,
And a merry ding dong, happy may we be."

In a paper on Bristol Freemasonry the writer mentioned that the Freemasons' version was included in a "Collection of Catches and Glees" arranged by Robert Broderip of Bristol in 1791. This suggests that at that time the brethren may have sung it as a glee either in Lodge or at a subsequent supper.

Although the verse is not, so far as the present writer knows, found in any of the 18th century rituals, spurious or otherwise, it occurs to him that, since it is an adaption of such an old song, it may possibly have been the custom in the early years of that century—in some lodges at any rate—to sing it after working the "Apprentices Part." When that "Part" was divided, as Vibert believed was the case, to form the germ of our first two degrees, the glee, which has now degenerated into a mere spoken tag, may well have been retained in its original place which would bring it to the end of the F.C. Degree.

In Exeter the verse is rendered

Happily have we met,
Happy may we part,
And haply (sic) meet again.

In still another form it is found under the heading, "The Parting Toast," and this reads:

Happy have we met
Happy have we been
Happy do we part and
Happy meet again.

We began this item with the form used in our local lodges. Doubtless these different wordings used by our brethren in England will be of interest to our membership. We think there is charm and sincerity in the Toast and hope it will never be removed from the honored place it holds at the festive board.

“DO YOU BRING ANYTHING WITH YOU?”

In primitive days before the advent of lamps or electricity the candle flame was the chief source of illumination. Each worshipper as he set off for church brought with him a candle and touched the flame already kindled upon the Altar. Each candle added to the brightness of the sanctuary whether it was seven candle power or seventy times seven. That power was possible through the contribution of each worshipper present.

Can you imagine any brother failing to bring his light to add to the light already kindled?

Those dark days have gone forever, thanks to modern science. The touch of a button can flood the sanctuary with a thousand candle power irrespective of the numbers present. No individual contribution is necessary.

As Freemasons let us apply this thought to our morals. Before entering the lodge room do we pause long enough in these busy days to ask ourselves the question. “Do I bring anything with me?” Does my presence in the lodge room add to or take away from the light of Freemasonry? Am I properly clothed? I don’t mean by that, “Have I got my Apron on?” The Tyler will see to that. Am I properly clothed *inwardly*? Have I come with a general desire for knowledge, and a sincere wish to render myself more extensively serviceable to my fellow creatures, or do I come with a chip on my shoulder, or from a mere sense of duty?

If you come properly prepared, even though your contribution is but one candle power, it is surprising what can be accomplished when the resources of a lodge are pooled. There is not sufficient darkness in all the world to put out the light of a single candle. “Let there be light.”—(H. B. Wallace).

USAGES AND CUSTOMS

There seems to exist among some of our members the idea that if the Constitution of Grand Lodge does not specifically prohibit certain things then it is permissible to go right ahead. This line of reasoning falls short of the whole purpose of Freemasonry especially when we recall to mind that not very long ago there was no printed word of any kind, not even a constitution, to guide and direct the actions of the brethren of yesteryear.

It would appear that in the practical world of today we have too many in our ranks who seek for direction in the pages of cold print. Let us examine this attitude for a few moments. Perhaps we can get a fresh viewpoint on our beloved old Craft.

In the ceremony of installation every Master of a Lodge obligates himself that he will not suffer any deviation from the

established usages, customs and landmarks; later he promises to observe the statutes and ceremonies of Grand Lodge.

These two obligations are distinct and separate. It must be apparent therefore that usages, customs and landmarks on the one hand and statutes and ceremonies on the other do not refer to the same things.

We do know, or at least we ought to be familiar with the statutes because each of us received a printed copy when we were received into membership.

When we come to consider the established usages and customs, however, we find ourselves in a wonderland, even as some of our number have found themselves when endeavouring to define our ancient landmarks.

It is here suggested that when confronted by some doubtful point we should make every effort to discover whether or not it belongs to the elusive category of usages and customs. Snap judgments, changes and innovation should be carefully guarded against.

At one time the searcher after Masonic truth would take time to read some of the books in our own library. By this means he would establish a firm groundwork for his Masonic knowledge. We cannot by any stretch of imagination boast that the present day Freemasons are forming queues at the library door in order to build a solid foundation on the subject of Freemasonry.

Have you ever felt the thrill of making a discovery?

Has it ever occurred to you that there is a vast store of wealth in the literature of the Craft? Finding an authoritative answer to a disputed point will bring you such a thrill and you cannot understand the joy of discovery until you have realized the experience.

If you want to advance in Masonic knowledge then you will require to travel far beyond the outer door of your lodge room in order to acquire this pearl of great price. We cannot force you to do this because you are a free man and we accepted you as such but surely among the twelve thousand Freemasons in this jurisdiction there are some who do want to improve themselves in Freemasonry.

Summing this up let us urge you against making snap judgments and quick decisions. Our Craft has existed for centuries and we have a wide literature on its history, philosophy and symbolism. Somewhere, if you will seek you may find a real interpretation, a genuine explanation even if the printed words of the Constitution makes no reference whatever to the matter.

Don't overlook this fact, the ancient usages and customs of Freemasonry have been co-existent with the Craft and are not all codified for ready reference.

Have you done any real searching since the night of your initiation?

JUBILEE YEAR AT DAUPHIN

We note with interest that our friends at Dauphin recently celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of their corporate municipal life. This is an event in the life of every community and we join in wishing continued success and prosperity to the people of Dauphin.

This brings up another historic point of particular interest to the Masonic fraternity of Manitoba—the Jubilee of Vermilion Lodge No. 68, G.R.M. Fifty years ago, on 1st December, 1898, the then Grand Master, M.W. Bro. Geo. B. Murphy issued a dispensation to ten Brethren authorizing them to open Vermilion Lodge in the village of Dauphin.

The D.D.G.M. for the Second Masonic District, Gregor St. Clair McGregor of Gladstone, carried out the ceremony of instituting the new lodge and we deem it of interest to quote the report he made to Grand Lodge at the time.

“On the 10th day of December I received word from the R.W. Bro. the Grand Secretary of the issuing of the Dispensation for opening Vermilion Lodge in the town of Dauphin. I notified Bro. T. A. Burrows that I would be in Dauphin on the 23rd December to institute the lodge, if that date would suit him, and he could get the brethren together.

“I got there on time, and found seventeen brethren waiting for me, and with the assistance of R.W. Bro. R. C. Brown we instituted and opened Vermilion Lodge with Bro. T. A. Burrows as Worshipful Master, Bro. James G. Harvey as Senior Warden, and Bro. Thomas Young as Junior Warden. Bro. Young was not able to reach the town in time for the meeting.

“After closing, we all adjourned to the banqueting hall where we spent a profitable time. This lodge has very bright prospects before it. They have secured the use of the Oddfellows Hall for their meetings and have supplied themselves with good furniture and jewels.

“I paid an official visit on April 4th on their regular meeting night and found them doing good work. The W.M. was absent attending the Legislature in Winnipeg. The Junior Warden was North in the Swan River District and could not reach town in time. The East was taken by R.W. Bro. R. C. Brown, Bro. J. G. Harvey, Senior Warden and Bro. W. Barnard was Junior Warden. The first degree was conferred on two candidates. The work was well done. A brother was admitted by affiliation. Applications for membership were received from four candidates. There were a number of visiting brethren present which helped to make a good meeting.

“After the close of the lodge we were invited to the Grand View Hotel where a splendid repast was partaken of by the assembled Masons. I found the books carefully kept by Secretary Widmeyer and the work well and skilfully done, and would recommend that a charter be granted to Vermilion Lodge.”

We presume our brethren of Vermilion Lodge have this important anniversary in mind and doubtless are making preparations to celebrate their Jubilee birthday in a true Masonic manner.

To the officers and members we extend the fraternal greetings of the Craft through the Jurisdiction.

HOW STANDS THE TIME?

This question is not asked in the ordinary sense but is prompted by an examination of the travels of our Grand Master since his election to that exalted office in the early days of June.

Within two weeks after his installation he journeyed to Edmonton to fraternize with the brethren of the Grand Lodge of Alberta. On his homeward trip he spent a few days in Saskatoon where the Grand Lodge of Saskatchewan was holding its Annual Communication.

The week following found him in Grand Forks, North Dakota, where he reciprocated the fraternal visits paid by the brethren of that Jurisdiction so faithfully in Manitoba.

Three new lodges have been chartered and this necessitated his presence at the several ceremonies held at Newdale, Brandon and the mining town of Bissett. The latter journey had to be made by airplane.

As we write these words he is doing his bit in Toronto where the Grand Lodge of Canada (in Ontario) is meeting. We believe he has visited lodges in our own jurisdiction in addition to these widely scattered jaunts.

All in all the demands upon the time of every brother elected to the highest office in the gift of his brethren means strenuous days and busy nights. Too often the careless seem to regard office in Freemasonry as a sinecure but this brief summary of your Grand Master's program over a period of six weeks will dissipate any thought that the office is one of recumbent ease.

He has the annual meetings of the several Masonic Districts still ahead of him and there are always certain lodge functions, anniversaries and special ceremonies where his presence is considered necessary.

Think of his busy life and the many miles he has to travel and when he is making one of his official visits in your district be sure and give him the welcome and support he deserves by coming to the meeting.

When we consider the demands upon our Grand Master it is fitting that we should ask ourselves "How stands the time?"

CORRECTION—

FIFTH DISTRICT MEETING

The date on the itinerary mailed by the Grand Secretary reads 29th October. This is an error. The correct date for this meeting is 20th October. All officers and members in the district will note accordingly.